

Comprehensive Plan for Early Childhood Services in Kansas

Kansas state agencies, in partnership with professional organizations, community-based providers and families are working together to develop an integrated comprehensive plan for early childhood services.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has received a two-year planning grant from the U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services - Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration. The planning effort is called the *Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant (ECCS)*.

The goals for the ECCS grant are to assure leadership in the development of cross systems integration partnerships in support of early childhood (ages 0-8) practices in order to identify and address special needs, enhance children's health and to support early learning strategies for success in school; and to support state agencies and communities in their efforts to build early childhood service systems which address five key components.

The plan must address five key components of early childhood care, including:

- 1) Access to health insurance and a medical home
- 2) Early care and education/child care
- 3) Mental health and social-emotional development
- 4) Parent education
- 5) Family support

Work on this plan began in January 2003 when the Children's Cabinet initiated a strategic planning process during a two-day session. At this meeting, a group of 45 early childhood stakeholders from across Kansas convened to develop a vision and mission and identified strengths and weaknesses of the current systems.

The group's adopted vision is: *"All children and families have the possibility to access high quality, individualized support services. Multiple points of entry exist which provide a single, knowledgeable resource for coordination of service delivery. Communities have responsibility for the management of allocated funds and are held accountable to produce desired outcomes."*

In addition to the strategic planning process, work is continuing on the Kansas School Readiness Indicators Initiative. Members of this task force represent the Governor's Office, Kansas Action for Children, Head Start, Kansas Department of Education Student Support Services: Maternal and Child Health Director, and Child Care Administrator. These indicators will be built upon the ECCS strategic plan.

Persons interested in further information about this initiative can contact Tracy Wohl, project manager, at 785-296-4536.